

I am writing you to bring your attention to a matter that I have been recently made aware of, between my local Cable TV provider, Bright House Networks, Inc., and our local NBC network affiliate, WFLA-TV, regarding transmission of WFLA's Digital Television signal over Cable.

Bright House currently carries a limited number of network stations in HD format: WTSP (CBS), WTVT (FOX), and WFTS (ABC). Notably missing are WFLA (NBC) and WTOG (UPN) networks. I have made numerous requests to Bright House via email or their web site, and I get one of two responses: none at all, or a response that "WFLA and WTOG are not available in HD format at this time, but take a look at our other HD offerings that you get with the HD package for a monthly fee".

Shortly before the start of the Olympics, I received a letter in the mail from Kevin Hyman, Tampa Bay Division President of Bright Networks, Inc; that was distributed to all Bright House HDTV customers:

Bright House Networks would like to thank you for being a valued customer. As a High Definition customer, you currently enjoy some of the most advanced technology cable television has to offer. HDTV is truly a fantastic new way of experiencing television and Bright House Networks is dedicated to bringing you the best HDTV programming available.

You may be aware that we have been successful in obtaining agreements with our local ABC, CBS and FOX broadcasters to transmit their digital signals that may include HD programming. In short, we have demonstrated our commitment to provide local HD programming in the Tampa Bay area.

Over the past several months, we have been working with WFLA (NBC) to secure an agreement to transmit their digital signal with HD programming. An agreement has not yet been reached, Therefore, as the Olympic Games approached, we reached out to WFLA (NBC) and offered a short-term agreement that would provide Olympic HD coverage. We regret to inform you that WFLA has declined our offer at this time. We will continue our discussions with WFLA and keep you informed on any new developments.

Upon receipt of this letter, I contacted Paulette Outlaw, Programming Manager with WFLA Television via e-mail, requesting comment on WFLA-TV's stance on the HDTV issue, since the letter clearly makes WFLA (NBC) out to be the reason its cable viewers cannot watch NBC in HD. Paulette promptly replied to my message, as did Eric Land, President and General Manager of WFLA a couple days later. Their response on WFLA's position was that Bright House was only offering to carry a portion of the digital signal, in order to save on bandwidth usage. This is unacceptable to WFLA, as well as to me personally as a consumer. WFLA is transmitting their primary broadcast, and two subchannel broadcasts within their digital envelope. Bright House is only willing to retransmit the primary channel, stripping off the other two.

As an adopter of HDTV, I have gone through the painstaking (and expensive) task of updating my home electronics to support HDTV signals. Unfortunately, capacity limitations do not permit me the ability to add an over-the-air (OTA) tuner to my system, which would enable me to pick up WFLA's digital broadcasting.

Adding an OTA tuner would also add out-of-pocket expenses in the order of at least \$300 to purchase. I pay a monthly rental fee for the "smart box" to Bright House Networks that should cover this. Historically, it has for analog channels.

As a paying customer to a cable provider, it is my expectation that any local programming that is picked up and retransmitted in order to provide the all-encompassing, experience to the customer-without need for additional equipment/complexity, be available to the consumer unmodified and in the same state that is available over the air. This is the way analog transmissions have been done, and I expect no less regarding digital transmissions.

With the enormous viewer impact that cable television has with just sheer customer quantities, the cable systems are the deciding factor in the rate of digital television adoption, which has been extremely slow to date. I feel that to ensure the cutover to digital TV is done quickly, and not forced to be delayed yet again, that the FCC should make a rule sooner than later, requiring cable systems to retransmit 100% of the intelligence that is transmitted by local broadcast stations. If that were the case here, we would very likely already have 100% of our local networks in digital format on cable today. But if complications like that described in this letter are here in the Tampa market, I would be willing to bet that the same arguments are happening in other markets across the country, slowing the adoption of DTV, and putting consumers in the middle of this battle.

I appreciate your time reading this, and look forward to and appreciate any comments that you may have in this matter.